

2018.01 Attestation Requirement on Canada Summer Jobs Program

Whereas, the application process for the 2018 Canada Summer Jobs program required applicants to deny their basic rights under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; and

Whereas, applicants were compelled to endorse an attestation of values promoted by the federal government that contravene the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; and

Whereas, by way of the attestation requirement, Canadian youth are being denied work experiences and opportunities through businesses and organizations that ethically cannot sign the attestation; therefore, be it

Resolved, that national council of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada in 98th annual national convention assembled urge the federal government to remove the attestation for all future Canada Summer Jobs programs.

BRIEF: Attestation Requirement on Canada Summer Jobs Program

The 2018 Summer Jobs Application now includes a mandatory attestation clause which read: “Both the job* and my organization’s core mandate* respect individual human rights in Canada, including the values underlying the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as well as other rights. These include reproductive rights and the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, mental or physical disability or sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression” (2018 Canada Summer Jobs Application). The *Funding: Canada Summer Jobs – Overview* clarifies that “reproductive rights” includes “the right to access safe and legal abortions” (E.S.D. Canada).

The attestation forces agreement with “reproductive rights” that are not enshrined in the Charter, as well as sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Yet, the Charter guarantees the right to “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression...” (Canada). Thus, the Charter and the attestation are in direct opposition of each other.

The summer jobs program provides employers in small businesses, not-for-profit organizations, public sector and faith-based organizations with funds designed to give students age 15-30 years, quality work experiences to enhance their careers. Many employers require experience before hiring. The Canada Summer Jobs program provides supervised, career-related work experience to Canadian youth who might otherwise find it difficult to obtain (E.S.D. Canada). “More than 1,500 applications were rejected for the Canada Summer Jobs program this year – up from just 126 last year – because of the government’s values test. If you were unwilling to sign an attestation indicating you agree with abortion, your application was rejected” (Hansard).

On January 25, 2018, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB), Muslim, Jewish leaders, and the president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada released a statement, signed by more than 80 faith leaders, which said, “The promise of a free and democratic society is that there be no religious or ideological test or conditions to receiving government benefits or protection”. The CCCCB, The Catholic Women’s League of Canada and other leaders of diverse faith communities also met with the minister of employment, workforce development and labour on March 21, 2018, offering proposed wording changes to the attestation to state, “My organization complies with all laws to which we are subject, including all applicable human rights and labour/employment laws and will use the Canada Summer Jobs grant only for the activities stated in our application. My organization recognizes that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms of all Canadians.” Unfortunately, the federal government refused to accept any proposed changes for this year (CCCCB).

The director of legal affairs for the Canadian Council of Christian Churches states that the attestation makes no legal sense. “...it attempts to impose a positive obligation on applicants ‘to respect’ charter ‘values’ because they do not apply to citizens... The Charter exists to protect people and organizations from the government. It is legally wrong to assert that people and organizations must abide by the Charter” (Bussey).

Works Cited

1. Bussey, Barry, *What the fuss about ticking a box on the Canada Summer Jobs applications is about*, February 20, 2018, <http://www.canadianlawyermag.com/author/barry-bussey/what-the-fuss-about-ticking-a-box-on-the-canada-summer-jobs-application-is-about-15341/>
2. Canada, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/how-rights-protected/guide-canadian-charter-rights-freedoms.html>
3. Canada, Employment and Social Development (E.S.D), 2018 Canada Summer Jobs Application November 2017 <https://catalogue.servicecanada.gc.ca/apps/EForms/pdf/en?ESDC-EMP5396A.pdf>
4. Canada, Employment and Social Development (E.S.D), Funding – Canada Summer Jobs Overview, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/canada-summer-jobs.html>
5. Canada Summer Jobs Attestation Meeting with Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and labour, the Honourable Patricia A. Hajdu on March 21, 2018, http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/Proposed_rewording_of_the_attestation-EN.pdf
6. Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Update Regarding Canada Summer Jobs Program, March 28, 2018, <http://ccb.ca/site/eng/media-room/statements-a-letters/4907-update-regarding-canada-summer-jobs-program>
7. Hansard, Canada, Senate, June 19, 2018, Hon. Nicole Eaton, Canada Summer Jobs Program, https://sencanada.ca/en/content/sen/chamber/421/debates/223db_2018-06-19-e
8. Leaders of Diverse Faith Communities and Organizations in Canada, January 25, 2018, Letter to the Prime Minister/Hon. Minister Patty Hajdu.

Action Plan

1. Write to the prime minister, the minister of employment and social development with copies to your local member of parliament urging the removal of the attestation from the Canada Summer Jobs program to respect the rights of freedom of religion and conscience as set in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.
2. Educate members on the importance of understanding the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* as it applies to the lives of Canadian citizens and encourage members to speak to family and friends. Have them contact relevant government officials to support removal of the attestation for all future Canada Summer Jobs programs.
3. Sign available petitions, or in absence of one in your area, start a petition following the current federal government guidelines:
<http://www.ourcommons.ca/marleaumontpetit/DocumentViewer.aspx?Lang=E&Sec=Ch22&Seq=3>
4. Monitor the federal government's response to the request contained in this resolution.